



STUDENT HANDBOOK

“It is our vision that each child who comes through our door joins a community of children, families, and teachers engaged in the joy, work, and wonder of childhood.”

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Welcome

Welcome to Fort Hill, the Smith College Center for Early Childhood Education. Our team consists of parents, teachers, specialists, students, substitutes, custodians, volunteers, administrative staff and community agencies working together to provide exemplary early education and care for young children infancy through preschool-age.

This handbook is intended to provide students with the essential information for working at Fort Hill. More detailed information is available in the *Parent Handbook*, the *Staff Handbook* and on the Fort Hill websites, www.smith.edu/forthill and www.smith.edu/forthill/staff. The *Parent* and *Staff Handbooks* are available online on the staff webpage. The username for the secure websites is cece and the password is children.

A list of Student Responsibilities is posted in each classroom. Please familiarize yourself with the responsibilities and attend to the tasks as appropriate.

We hope you will feel comfortable to ask questions and communicate openly with all the staff at Fort Hill. We welcome you to our team!

Observation

We encourage students to spend time observing the classroom before beginning to work with children. This opportunity will allow you to become more familiar with the teachers and children, the classroom environment, and the general atmosphere and routines in the room. In order for all of us to be clear, consistent and respectful in our teaching, we ask that during your observation you pay particular attention to the following aspects of the room:

- The types of language and phrases teachers use with children
- Guidance and discipline techniques used in the room
- Boundaries and limits set for children
- The role of the teacher, and the timing and level of their support, in initiating and supporting play and interactions
- The teachers roles and their relationships with children
- The ways in which teachers guide and support children's exploration and learning (e.g., organization of the environment and presentation of materials)
- General routines and schedules

Please keep in mind that everything that happens in the classroom is confidential and should not be shared with people outside of the school. Feel free to come to the teachers in your room at any time with comments, ideas, insights, concerns, or questions you may have.

Mission Statement

The mission of the program is to:

- provide exemplary early education and care for young children;
- offer a laboratory for research and fieldwork for college students and faculty; and,
- support the child care needs of families.

History of Fort Hill

Program History:

In 1926, Smith College President William Allan Neilson established both the Smith College Nursery School and the Smith College Day School.

The Nursery School opened with fifteen students, many of them children of the Smith College faculty. It had been organized as a cooperative school by The Institute for the Coordination of Women's Interests and provided educational opportunities for Smith graduate students. It became a part of the Education Department in 1928.

For many years the two laboratory schools formed one school called the Smith College Campus School located on two sites of the Smith College campus: Gill Hall on Prospect Street housing the kindergarten through sixth grade program, and Fort Hill on Lyman Road housing the preschool program.

The Campus School began offering full-day programs at the Fort Hill site in 1992 when an Infant and Toddler Program and an Extended-Day Program were established to provide childcare services for Smith faculty and staff. Initially these programs were based entirely in the Fort Hill building. As the number of families utilizing the programs steadily increased, additional classrooms were added in adjacent buildings to accommodate the larger number of children enrolled.

In 2003, in response to a campus-wide Child Care Study Committee, the Preschool Program, the Infant/Toddler Program and the Extended-Day Program, formed The Smith College Center for Early Childhood Education (an entity separate from the Campus School) to provide continuity for children, families, and staff. In August 2005, the program moved from the historic Lyman estate building to a new building on the grounds that accommodates seven classrooms.

The program currently enrolls approximately ninety children, infants through preschoolers, in six classrooms. Approximately half of the families are affiliated with Smith College.

Site History:

The name Fort Hill refers to early events in Northampton's history. Records indicate (although there is no archeological evidence) that the native Nonotuck tribe built a fort in the area in 1664. In the 1830s, Samuel Whitmarsh, a merchant tailor from New York, built a large silk-worm cocoonery (200' long, 26' wide and two stories high) on the site and introduced silk manufacturing to the area. Silk manufacturing was a successful commercial venture in Northampton for many years (for more information on the silk industry, visit the Smith website, www.smith.edu/hsc/silk/northampton.html).

Whitmarsh built the main house in 1838 and surrounded the property with gardens, shrubbery, trees, walks, driveways and a greenhouse. The twenty-seven acre Whitmarsh homestead was one of the most beautiful places in the Connecticut River Valley and was featured in mid-century tourists' guides as the perfect place for a carriage ride. The brick carriage house remains on the property and is used by the College for storage.

Catherine and Edward Lyman bought the property in 1866 to use as a summer home. Mr. Lyman was a native of Northampton and had moved to Brooklyn to work as an importer of tea and silk. He is best known in the city as the benefactor of the Academy of Music.

The Whitmarsh estate remained in the Lyman family until 1946, when Smith College purchased the property. The main house has been renovated several times during the last one hundred and fifty years, most recently in 1999. The gracious estate home has served a variety of functions, including use as a dormitory. The building now houses the Fort Hill creative recycling project, TRACES. More information about TRACES is available on our website.

Philosophies

Program Philosophy

With a mission to provide exemplary early education and care for young children, we strive to create and sustain a caring and respectful community dedicated to supporting the growth and development of each child. In such a cooperative and responsive community, differences are accepted and celebrated, and all relationships are based on respect.

Central to our philosophy is the belief that emotional security and attachment to responsive and respectful adults provide the basis for learning. We view the learning process as a dynamic one that is enhanced by openness to new ideas and willingness to take intellectual risks in the pursuit of knowledge. Guided by a deep respect for the potential of all young children, we recognize the individual learning style, developmental timetable, and personal strengths of each child.

We believe that children learn best through active exploration, experience, interaction, experimentation and modeling. We see the classroom environment as another teacher;

each classroom design is carefully planned and evolves throughout the year to meet the needs of the children within a structure of routine, predictability, and consistency. Teachers act as guides, observers and collaborators with children in their learning and discovery, as partners with parents and as collaborators with one another.

Discipline Philosophy

The Smith College Center for Early Childhood Education shares with parents the ultimate responsibility for guiding children toward the goal of self-discipline. The staff believes that setting firm, consistent rules helps to build a child's conscience and self-control. We utilize teaching strategies, limits and routines that foster the internalized controls, awareness of others, and positive social exchanges essential for constructive group life.

Children are guided with positive directions and rational explanations of expectations. To promote the development of autonomy, they are given choices within appropriate limits. We consider the classroom environment to be an important tool in this process. The environment is arranged so that a minimal number of "no's" is necessary. Teachers alter the physical environment, the style of supervision, or the activities offered in the classroom to affect children's behavior, minimize conflict and promote negotiation and cooperation.

We recognize, however, that it is both common and age-appropriate for young children to test limits and behave "out of bounds." This is their way of exploring relationships, expressing their deep feelings, and testing their own autonomy. Infants and toddlers especially may hit, pull hair, poke, push, snatch toys, bite and yell as a means to get what they want, to express frustration, or simply to explore another person's response. Depending on the age and motivation for the child's misbehavior, our intervention strategies will vary. However, our message to the children is ALWAYS that, although these behaviors are understandable and their feelings are acceptable and important, hurtful behaviors are NOT acceptable. Our goal is to recognize the individual needs of children while helping them develop legitimate, appropriate ways of meeting their needs without hurting others or the materials.

We do use the technique of "logical consequences" with older toddlers and preschoolers. In the case of a child misusing a material, s/he first is given the opportunity to use it appropriately. If that is not possible, the child must give up the activity to try again later or the next day. If two children are over-stimulating each other or disturbing others, they first are given the opportunity to settle down. If that is not possible, they must spend some time apart to rechannel their energies and be given the opportunity to play/work together again later or the next day.

Our philosophy of discipline is based on "emotion coaching" as described by John Gottman in his book, *Raising an Emotionally Intelligent Child*. The following is a quote from the introduction to the book:

“In the last decade or so, science has discovered a tremendous amount about the role emotions play in our lives. Researchers have found that even more than IQ, your emotional awareness and ability to handle feelings will determine your success and happiness in all walks of life, including family relationships. For [teachers], this quality of "emotional intelligence"-- as many now call it-- means being aware of ... children's feelings, and being able to empathize, soothe, and guide them. For children, who learn most lessons about emotion from their [caregivers], it includes the ability to control impulses, delay gratification, motivate themselves, read other people's social cues, and cope with life's ups and downs.”

Discipline involves setting limits and at times restricting or prohibiting, but it involves much more. It incorporates respect and caring for self and others, explaining the reasons for limits, and helping to provide control for a child who lacks self-control. It also involves helping a child distinguish between feelings and behaviors, developing an appropriate repertoire for expressing one’s feelings and needs, and developing empathy.

Curriculum Philosophy

The curriculum for the Smith College Center for Early Childhood Education reflects the staff’s commitment to what we believe and know to be best practice in the early childhood field. We view children as researchers of their world, constructing knowledge on an ongoing basis.

We have found inspiration in the early childhood schools of Reggio Emilia, Italy. These Reggio Emilia schools have been recognized worldwide for their care of young children and their commitment to excellence. We are fortunate that Smith College has a professional connection with Pistoia, Italy, where the philosophy and practice of the early childhood schools are similar to those of Reggio Emilia.

Our curriculum recognizes the importance of relationships for the well-being of young children. Within the context of supportive relationships, the curriculum emphasizes supporting child-initiated problem-solving, long-term investigations, and promoting prosocial behavior. Teachers are constantly trying to understand and consider what the children know about their world and help them to form new hypotheses through ongoing exploration of a subject. We strive to help children develop a love of learning as they come to know they can learn.

We strongly support children in acquiring a set of fundamental concepts and skills as well as the habits of mind and heart that enable them to understand and operate in their world as effective problem-solvers and responsible community members.

Our active social curriculum is based on the belief that creating a caring, respectful environment takes effort and attention. The staff members practice “emotion coaching,” as described by John Gottman, to facilitate and support the development of social and emotional skills.

The process of emotion coaching is as follows:

1. become aware of the child's emotion;
2. recognize the emotion as an opportunity for intimacy and teaching;
3. listen empathetically, validating the child's feelings;
4. help the child find words to label the emotion s/he is having; and
5. set limits while exploring strategies to solve the problem at hand.

Policies and Practices

Staffing

Each classroom team includes at least one supervising teacher and assistant teachers, as well as students. Children remain with their teachers for the three years they are in the infant/toddler program and the two years they are in the preschool program. There is one infant room (North Room), two toddler rooms (South and East Rooms) and three preschool rooms (Group S is young three-year-olds, Group B is a mixed-age room with three- and four-year-olds, and Group A is four-year-olds).

The school is supported by specialists in drama, music and visual arts.

Students should never be alone with children. Please be sure a regular staff member is in the room with you. Children should never be left alone – each child should be able to be seen and heard at all times.

Please continually scan the environment and supervise the group of children, as well as individual children. Please do not engage in lengthy conversations with the adults in the room. If you see a child alone, without adult supervision, please stay with the child and go together to find a regular staff member.

Outdoor Play Policy

The children at Fort Hill go out every day, even if it is for only a few minutes. Please dress appropriately – snow pants, neck warmers, mittens, warm boots and raingear are encouraged.

Playground

All staff members should regularly scan the entire playground and monitor the whereabouts of all children.

If children are playing on the tire swing, an adult must be closely supervising the activity. Please push moderately on the tire and regular swings— no “under dogs” or pushing while children are standing. The tire swing is limited to three children at a time.

First aid kits are located in the storage sheds on the playgrounds. If a child is injured, please tell a regular staff member and s/he will follow-up with first aid and an injury report.

Walking/strolling field trips

Infants and toddlers may walk or ride belted into strollers, wagons, or buggies for outings both on and off the CECE premises. When one teacher takes children for a walk, they should remain in sight of the classrooms/playgrounds and carry a two-way radio or cell phone. Two or more adults may take children for a walk beyond the immediate premises. They should let the classrooms involved know where they are going and should take a first aid kit, copies of emergency cards, and a cell phone or two-way radio. The administrative assistant should be notified prior to the walk and the appropriate cell phone numbers should be given to the administrative assistant. A regular staff member must accompany students on walks with children.

The protocol for walking field trips is:

- An adult always leads
- Adults are placed throughout the line
- An adult walks at the end of the line
- One adult for every four children
- An adult stands in the crosswalk to stop traffic as children cross
- Teachers map/walk the route before the trip with safety issues in mind
- Always use the crosswalks for crossing when available
- Use of police for crossing when deemed necessary
- Always carry: first aid kit, cell phone, allergy meds, emergency cards, and attendance sheet
- Prepare children before the trip—safety discussions, “rules for walking,” explanations to parent helpers of their responsibilities

Photographing Children

If a family asks to photograph children at the CECE, please remind them that to protect the privacy of the children and their families, photographs are allowed only for personal use.

Each family signs a permission release to photograph their children. If you plan to photograph children for coursework, please check with the supervising teacher to be sure parents have given written permission for the intended use.

Food Policy

Please do not share any food with children and provide food only upon the direction and supervision of a regular staff member. Menus are posted in the classroom for the food that will be served during the week.

Please wear food service gloves at all times when preparing and serving food.

Each preschool and toddler group has a morning snack, lunch (the preschool lunch begins at 12:30), and an afternoon snack (after 3:15). A large part of social learning and family living involves food. Teachers sit with the children during lunch and try to make these meal times relaxed and warm. In this way, the children begin to participate in the social aspects of eating.

An important part of a comfortable eating environment is the preparation of the food itself. There is a continuum of food preparation as children grow. For instance, infants need adults to provide completely prepared foods (usually warm) for them to eat. For children wanting to feed themselves, we ask parents to begin to provide food that is easy to pick up such as sandwiches or pasta. When children become fully able to feed themselves, we ask that parents send their food in individual lunch boxes. As children become more independent, less adult preparation is needed. For instance, by the time children are in preschool, they bring their own lunchboxes to the table and set up their own food as much as possible.

Toddler and preschool teachers strive to provide nutritious and balanced snacks for children. We serve a variety of different foods and present them in an enjoyable manner. A snack menu is posted in each room.

Toileting and Diapering

Parents provide diapers and ointments for infants and children not yet toilet trained. Children in diapers are changed at specific times during the day, but are also changed whenever necessary. We ask parents to check their children's supplies of diapers and extra clothing regularly. We will give reminders as necessary. All staff wear gloves when diapering.

When toddler children do express interest in using the toilet at school, teachers offer them the chance to sit on the toilet at each diaper change. When children are out of diapers and staying dry most of the time at home, teachers are happy to begin the transition at school as well. Teachers will talk with parents about how best to support children's needs through this transition. We ask that parents use diapers until children are ready for

underwear. Our experience with “pull-ups” is that they give children mixed messages about their toileting independence and make diaper changes more difficult in group care.

We find that the transition to using the toilet takes place most easily when children initiate the training process. This may involve extra patience and giving up of adult expectations. When children are ready, this process most often happens quickly and easily.

Children who have learned to use the toilet on their own will be encouraged to continue to do so. Children who are toilet trained are reminded periodically throughout each day to use the toilet. Child-sized toilets are located in the classrooms for the convenience and safety of the children. No child is ever punished, scolded, or humiliated for soiling, wetting, or not using the toilet. Teachers can be a source of information and guidance in the toilet learning process.

Nap and Rest Policy

Each preschool and toddler group has a rest time after lunch. Teachers promote rest time by darkening the room (shutting off the lights and pulling down shades), rubbing children’s backs and by playing quiet music or story tapes. Children are not required to sleep but are expected to stay on their rest mats resting quietly for a set amount of time so as not to disturb those who do sleep. We have found that the children staying for a full day who sleep have a more pleasant, comfortable afternoon. We have arranged the schedule of our day to allow for children who take some time to fall asleep to be able to have a complete rest when they do. Children sleep as long as they wish and are not wakened by the staff. Children who are not asleep at the end of the rest period may leave the nap area to engage in quiet activities.

In the infant room, teachers work closely with parents in developing a routine that is both familiar and predictable. The infants follow their own individual rhythms of sleeping, eating, diapering, and playing. Predictable routines help children develop self-regulation and trust in their caregivers and their environment.

Dismissal Time/Third Party Release

Children may be released to someone other than their parents only with written permission and a photo ID. Please check with a regular staff member if you do not know the parent or person picking-up a child.

Code of Ethics and Confidentiality

Information regarding children and their families must be held in strict confidence and discussed only with other appropriate staff members in the context of providing an appropriate environment and care for children. This information should never be

discussed in the presence of children. If parents want to discuss their children or classroom issues, please refer them to the supervising teacher.

Conversations with parents should be positive and professional.

The National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) Code of Ethics is available on the staff website.

Health and Safety Policies

It is the responsibility of every staff member to correct unsafe conditions (e.g., spills on the floor, objects lying in dangerous places) and guard against accidents to children and staff. Unsafe conditions not immediately alterable should be reported to the administrative assistant who will report them to the appropriate department.

Please take note of the location of the fire extinguishers in the building.

Please wear protective gloves whenever you may come into contact with bodily fluids, e.g., wiping noses, applying band-aids, etc.

If you are sick or injured at work

If you are injured or become sick while at Fort Hill, one of the staff members will call Public Safety (x800) to respond.

If you have any allergies, please notify the supervising teacher and she will post the information appropriately.

All regular staff members are trained in CPR and first aid.

Public Safety

In the event of any emergency, the first step is to call x800 for Public Safety. The regular staff members will assume responsibility for contacting Public Safety.

Evacuation

Emergency Exits are posted in each room, and the staff is trained in emergency procedures. Fire drills are conducted once every other month.

In case of fire or other such emergency, the building will be evacuated as follows:

1. The fire alarm will sound in the building, at the Smith Public Safety office, and at the Northampton Fire Department.
2. Two teachers will lead/carry the children out of the building to a designated area where attendance will be taken. Infants will be transported in evacuation

cribs, which are located in the back hallway. One staff member from each of the South and East rooms will push the evacuation cribs to the playground doors of those rooms. One teacher will be at the front of the line and another at the end. The infant/toddler wing will meet by the dumpster in the parking lot and the preschool wing will meet near the sugar maple in the front yard. The supervising teachers will immediately take attendance.

3. One teacher from each group will check classrooms, hallways, bathrooms, etc. for children before exiting the building and will bring the class lists/sign-in sheets with them. When there are only two teachers, the second teacher assumes the third teacher's duties.
4. The administrative assistant will "sweep" the preschool wing to check to be sure that all have exited and will carry out emergency contact cards and a cell phone. S/he will follow the preschool group to the designated area.
5. The director will "sweep" the common area and the infant/toddler wing and will carry keys to the old Fort Hill building. If the program coordinator is also on site, she will sweep the infant/toddler wing. The administrator sweeping the infant/toddler wing will follow the group to the designated area.
6. The two administrators will signal one another to indicate that all children have been accounted for.
7. There are blankets by the front door to take in the event of cold weather. There are supplies in the old Fort Hill building and the groups will be brought to that building if the evacuation is extended.
8. If necessary, children will be brought to the Smith College Campus Center to await the resolution of the emergency and parents will be notified by phone.

Hand Washing

Staff, children and families wash hands when entering the classroom, before eating or handling food, after toileting and diapering, after coming in contact with bodily fluids and discharges, and after handling classroom animals or their equipment.

Biting

If a child has been bitten, the regular supervising teacher will:

1. Wash the wound with soap and water
2. Apply ice
3. If the bite breaks the skin, notify the program coordinator and the director who will then call the parent.
4. Complete an Injury Report

Give attention to the bitten child and remind the biter that biting hurts and that we do not bite in school. We reinforce the concept that even if the activity is inappropriate, the child is not a "bad" child. Do not force a child to apologize.

We will look for the causes of the behavior and try to take a preventative approach. We will shadow the biter in situations where we think the child might bite. We will be

consistent in our interventions, realizing it is a temporary stage of normal development. We will communicate to parents about the incident. Information about the “biter” is confidential.

Allergies

Information about allergies are posted in each classroom and in the office. The CECE is currently a peanut-free and shellfish-free school.

Abuse and Neglect

If you have any concerns about the welfare of a child, please communicate your concerns immediately to the supervising teacher or the director.

B. IDENTIFYING AND REPORTING SUSPECTED CHILD ABUSE/NEGLECT PROCEDURE

All regular staff members are mandated reporters according to Massachusetts law. If a regular staff member has a reasonable suspicion of abuse or neglect of a child, he/she must file a report with the Massachusetts Department of Social Services. If you, as a student, are concerned about a child, please communicate your concerns to the supervising teacher or director immediately.

The following are the steps that supervising teachers follow in reporting:

1. A staff member who suspects abuse or neglect must document his/her observations including the child’s name, date, time, child’s injuries, child’s behavior and any other pertinent information. The staff member will discuss this information with the director.
2. The director or the staff member with assistance from the director will make a verbal report to DSS, to be followed by a written report 51A within 48 hours.
3. If a staff member believes that an incident should be reported to DSS, and the director disagrees, the staff member may report to DSS directly.
4. All concerns of suspected abuse and neglect that are reported to DSS will be communicated to the parents by the director unless a report is contra-indicated.

Procedure for Identifying and Reporting Child Abuse/Neglect While in Care of the Center

It is the CECE’s commitment to protect all children in this facility from abuse or neglect. The following are procedures for reporting suspected child abuse/neglect while the child is in the Center’s care.

Any report of suspected abuse or neglect of a child will be immediately reported to the Department of Social Services (DSS) and the Department of Early Education and Care (EEC). A meeting will be held with the staff member in question to inform him/her of the filed report. **DSS telephone number is 1-413-775-5000.**

The staff person in question will be immediately suspended from the program with pay pending the outcome of the DSS and EEC investigations. If the report is screened out by the DSS, the Director has the option of having the staff member remain on suspension pending the EEC investigation or allowing the staff member to return to the classroom. This decision will be made by the Director and will be based on the seriousness of the allegations and the facts available.

If the allegations of abuse/neglect are substantiated, it will be the decision of the Director whether or not the staff member will be reinstated.

The Director and staff will cooperate fully with all investigations.

If staff members are alone with a child, they will remain in full view of others and do not meet behind closed doors.

The Facility

The building was designed to provide an environment that offers opportunities for interaction between and among teachers, children and parents. The transparency of the doors and windows extends an invitation to encounters with the playgrounds and with the interior environments and members of the community. Classrooms connect to one another and to common spaces to support a sense of community and of belonging. It is our hope that the environment fosters meaningful relationships and a feeling of connection to the spaces and people at Fort Hill.

Traffic Flow

Because Lyman Road is narrow and cars are often parked on the side of the road, we ask staff and families to use it only for exiting Fort Hill.

To enter Fort Hill, turn off of South Street onto Munroe Street, then turn left onto East Street, and arrive at the campus via the one-way entry driveway.

Please leave the campus via the one-way exit driveway, turning right onto Lyman Road.

Parking

There are two parking areas at Fort Hill. The lot closest to the building is reserved for families carrying infants, handicapped parking and bus drop-off. The main lot is designated for families and staff. All staff members should park in the area farthest from the building. As you arrive, please park in an orderly fashion in order to maximize the use of the parking lot and to make it as safe as possible for young children.

Please begin by filling in the row at the far end of the lot, along the grass. When that is full, please begin a double row at the lamp post at the far end of the parking lot. Please do not park on the driveway or near the old Fort Hill building.

Access to the Building

The security system is effective between 8:00 a.m. and 5:00 p.m. on days the program is open. When the system is operating, the door can be opened with the code. The code is currently 3290, the last four digits of the main telephone number, and can be changed whenever necessary. Please keep the code confidential in order to maintain the security of the building.

When you enter the code, the lights will flash: red, red, red, green. You can open the door when the green light is on. If you do not open the door when the green light is lit, or if you make an error when entering the code, please wait seven seconds so the system can reset.

There is a security camera at the front door. When someone comes to the front door and does not know the security code, s/he is able to ring a doorbell, located on the right side of the door. The camera will allow the administrative assistant (or other staff members) to see who is there and to either open the door (to a known person) or get assistance from another staff member. No one should answer the door alone if there is question as to who might be at the door. The door can be unlocked with a buzzer located behind the administrative assistant's desk.

All doors to the building should be locked at all times. If a group is on the playground, please use the key hanging adjacent to the door to unlock the playground door and then relock it when the group returns to the classroom.

There is an emergency key to unlock the bathroom doors in the long drawer of the administrative assistant's desk.

Areas of the Building

When you begin working at Fort Hill, the program coordinator will give you a tour of the building. The *Staff Handbook* details the rooms of the buildings and guidelines for using them.

The Common and the Infant/Toddler wing are shoeless environments. You may either bring indoor shoes to wear when you are in these areas, or you may take off your shoes.

Please wash your hands in the bathroom sink (not the kitchen sink) as soon as you enter a classroom.

Computers

The building is in the process of becoming wireless.

There is an account for students to use to access the Smith Network. The username is forthill and the password is forthill2.

The TRACES project also has a Novell account: the username is traces and the password is traces2.

We recycle inkjet cartridges and receive a refund. If you would like to donate used inkjet cartridges to Fort Hill, please place them in the box in the Common underneath the sign-in area.

Telephones

Each classroom, as well as many of the common spaces, has an individual extension. Directions for the phone system are posted near the telephones. Incoming calls to all classroom telephones go directly to voice mail so that the ringing telephones will not be disruptive. Families are requested to call the main number, 585-3290. If the call is urgent, we will interrupt the classroom, otherwise the caller will be connected to the classroom voicemail.

Please limit incoming personal calls to the school telephone to the greatest extent possible. Personal outgoing calls can be made in the teachers' workroom. Please do not make personal long distance calls or call "Information" on CECE telephones.

All Smith College extensions can be dialed from off-campus using 585 as a prefix.

There is a cell phone in the office for emergencies, to take on field trips and to use when the office is not staffed. The number is 413-335-3389. Please use this phone only for emergencies.

The phone above the printer in the office is an emergency telephone and should not be used except in the case of an emergency.

Please turn off cell phones when you are in the classroom.

The password to the classroom voice mailboxes is "forthill" (36783344).

Curriculum

The curriculum at Fort Hill develops from teachers' attentive observation of children's focus and intent. The teachers at Fort Hill record their observations and plan how to deepen children's experiences. These recordings may be referred to as "documentations." As educators, teachers seek to participate in the moment without controlling it. Teachers follow the child's interest rather than focusing on a predetermined outcome or plan.

You will notice in the following "Environment" section a description of the Principles of Environmental Design. In that section, we ask adults to refrain from making models for children. Children may ask you to draw something for them. We encourage children's efforts and competencies and consider drawing as one of "the hundred languages" that children use to express their ideas. If a child asks you to draw for them, please refrain from drawing and instead, talk with them about their ideas and support them in their efforts.

One way to help a child is to look closely at an object or a picture of the object and identify all the parts. Another way is to brainstorm places to begin drawing a form – maybe starting with a line or shape, or with a detail and working out from there. For example, "If I wanted to try to draw this, where would be a good place to start? Where would you begin?" Another way to experiment and explore ways to construct a form by drawing is to suggest that the child practice drawing with a finger or capped marker.

Guidance

The goal of our guidance philosophy is to support children as they develop the ability to self-regulate their emotions, impulses, and attention. Our interactions towards this goal are respectful and promote children's self-esteem and confidence. Please do not label behavior in terms that reflect on the integrity of the child, e.g., "babyish," "naughty," "selfish," or "bad." Please acknowledge children's feelings, e.g., "you look very sad" rather than telling them "there's no reason to cry" or "four-year-olds don't cry." By observing the teachers, you will notice a style and way of interacting that is individualized and supports children as they develop self-discipline. As a laboratory school, we model early education and care for students, families and colleagues. Professional, and positive, attitudes and behaviors are important in a high quality program.

Teachers establish routines and set limits as a way to provide boundaries that are reassuring for children. If you have difficulty with a child, please ask one of the regular

staff members for help. Below are some of the techniques that teachers use to define the boundaries and set limits on behavior:

- Clearly state of the limit, e.g., “The blocks are for building, the balls may be thrown outside.” Children feel safe when there are clear limits.
- State expectations positively, e.g., “Please keep your feet on the floor.” rather than “Don’t climb on the table.”
- Redirection, e.g., “Let’s go see what John is doing in the sensory table.”
- Support problem-solving and negotiation between the children, e.g., “How can you tell John that you would like to have a turn with the truck?”
- Logical consequences or choices, e.g., “You are having a hard time playing with the blocks without throwing. Please make another choice. Would you like to work with clay or paint at the easel?”
- Model effective ways to express feelings and emotions, e.g., “I do not like it when you grab the book from my hands. What can you say to let me know that you would like to have the book?” – or, “You can ask me for the book, - please may I have the book.”

When you talk with children, please be positive – use a tone of voice, active listening and manner that conveys respect for the child as an individual. You may also maintain your self-respect. For example, you may help children understand the limits of their expectations of others by saying, “I’m tired of running, I’d like to rest now.”

Conflict Resolution:

Before stepping into a situation, decide if children can settle things without your help. As children mature developmentally and gain more experience in resolving conflicts they will begin to find their own solutions to problems.

Please carefully observe how teachers facilitate conflict resolutions between children. Especially notice body position, tone of voice, choice of words, and questions asked.

Please note we do not require children to say, “I’m sorry.”

Physical Conflict between Children: i.e. hitting, shoving, etc.

Intervene immediately to stop behavior that is unsafe to the child or other children. When children are fighting with others, adults must immediately take action. If children are hitting one another, it may be necessary to physically separate them to calm them down. To do this, position your body in between the children. State to the children that you realize there is a problem, such as: “I see there is a problem. You are really upset. Let’s get some help.” Then locate a teacher.

Interactions

Our interactions with children, families and colleagues are based on respectful listening. Listen carefully and observe the children, as well as the other adults in the room, so that you are able to guide the children.

Scaffolding

Our goal is to offer children the opportunity to enjoy the sense of accomplishment and accompanying positive feelings of self-esteem and confidence by completing a difficult task with just the right amount of support (known as “scaffolding”). Often it is helpful to wait a moment or two, observing and listening, before responding. Your interactions can help a child enjoy the success of meeting a challenge without undue frustration. For example, you may hold down the bottom of a jacket while a child pulls the zipper, or you may demonstrate how to support the milk pitcher while pouring. The scaffolding will be different for each child and for each situation – listening and observing will be the keys to determining how you can best support each child.

The tone and loudness of your voice impact the classroom climate. Please talk directly to both adults and children (do not talk “across” the room or “across” other people). Please speak in a quiet conversational tone and bring your body to a position that enables you to speak face-to-face to children. Please do not talk about children in front of other children or adults. When the adults are positive and maintain control children learn self-regulation and feel safe.

Avoid “over praising.” Rather than saying “good job,” be specific and offer meaningful feedback. For example, you use descriptive phrases such as, “I notice that you drew a long line” rather than “I like it,” “Cool,” or “Awesome.”

Avoid labeling a child – either positively or negatively. Avoid comments like “good girl,” and “you’re so smart,” as well as “bad boy.” Also avoid labeling in conversations with adults, e.g., “John is mean.” Rather, describe behaviors, “John had a hard time controlling himself today; he hit several children.”

Avoid gender stereotyping, e.g., “We need some strong boys to help us move this box,” or “would the girls like to have a tea party?”

Use positive phrasing, for example, “Be gentle with the book” rather than “Don’t tear the book.”

Offer limited choices, e.g., “Do you want me to help you with your coat or do you want to do it yourself?”

Avoid ultimatums, e.g., “You have to do _____ before I _____.”

Prepare the child in advance for what will happen next, e.g., “We will read one book, then we will get our coats on.”

Ask open-ended questions, e.g., “What would happen if…” “Is there another way to…” Answers to open-ended questions lead to longer conversation and dialogue – the answer is not apparent, it is developed and encourages thinking, problem-solving and language.

Give children choices only when they are truly options. Saying to a child, “In five minutes it will be time to clean-up, O.K?” leaves you wide open for her to respond, “No, I’m not done playing yet.” Instead, be clear in your expectations: “In five minutes clean-up time will start so that we can get ready for recall time.”

Model appropriate manners. Children learn a lot about civility through adults’ role modeling. Please use good manners with children and do not demand that they use words such as ‘please’ and ‘thank you.’

Avoid forcing children to apologize. We acknowledge children’s feelings and describe the feelings of others. We do not ask children to apologize or say “I’m sorry.”

Use supportive comments rather than praise. We strive for children to gain self-esteem through intrinsic rewards and mastering skills, rather than through the extrinsic rewards of pleasing adults. Examples of supportive comments to make to children are: “Thank you for helping to pick up the blocks. Now we can go have a snack.” And, “I can see you worked really hard on that. You drew a really long line.”

No child is subjected to physical punishment, verbal abuse or threats. Children are not placed in isolated “time outs.” Children are never punished by withholding food or water. The adults do not address children harshly, loudly, with intimidation, ridicule or sarcasm. Please do not discuss a child’s behavior with another adult in the presence of other children or parents. Written or verbal reports regarding conflicts between children do not include the name of the child who bit, pushed or hit the other child.

Environment

The environment at Fort Hill is carefully planned to reflect the importance of community, interaction, beauty and respect. You will notice that materials are carefully organized and displayed, that natural and found materials are used more frequently than materials that have a predetermined use, that light plays an important role in the classrooms, and that the environment supports our image of the child as highly competent. One aspect of this respect involves teachers’ marks on children’s works. Teachers may use post-it notes or write lightly on the back of a child’s work so that the teachers writing, whether it is the child’s name or some documentation of the child’s words, is not part of the child’s work.

Principles of Environmental Design

Presented by Cathy Topal, Diane Harr, and Susan Etheredge to teachers at Fort Hill and the Smith College Campus School to support them in setting up their classrooms.

1. We want the school environment to reflect our special identity and mission as a lab school.
2. We want to show [visual] traces of the students and educators who spend time here.
3. We want to create an environment that shows not only the results, but also the processes of learning and knowledge-building.
4. We want an environment that gives a sense of well-being to children and educators. We feel it should feel peaceful, clean, thoughtful, respectful, uncluttered. When too there are too many images, there is no place for children to generate their own images. We [prefer to leave] some space blank – as a space for the eyes to rest. We feel that less clutter encourages more reflection.
5. We feel strongly that we don't want commercial images produced by adults on the walls. That also goes for any kind of work on pre-cut templates or made by tracers or stencils.

Whenever we see forms that all look alike, it immediately says to the viewer that the children are missing. Using forms like these is actually disrespectful of children. It says to a child, "I don't think that you can draw a good enough person, head shape, animal, etc." It says, "my shape is better than yours, so I want you to use my shape." It says, "I don't trust you to do it yourself." Tracers and predrawn forms that children fill in discourage children from doing it themselves. They encourage stereotypic work. They take away the challenge.

We want to keep in mind that we never want to be below the potential of children. Commercial images and tracers are below children's potential. They compromise our mission as a laboratory school.

6. We feel that it is part of our mission as educators to educate the community about the intelligence and great potential of children. When visitors enter our school and walk through it, we want them to see that this is a community that respects and celebrates the potential of children. We want the children and educators – their thoughts, images and work to be spotlighted.
7. We want the spaces in our school to say, "This is a place where adults have thought about – and keep re-thinking – the quality of the environment." "This

is a place in which all the people in the school take pride in caring for one another. This caring is reflected in the way we treat the school environment in which we all live.”

Human Resources Management

Arrival Time

Please arrive on time and plan to stay until you are scheduled to leave. The teachers and children depend on you. If you will be late or are unable to come to work, please call as soon as possible by calling x3290.

If you know in advance that you will be unable to work on a particular day, please complete a Time-Off Request (available on the staff website) and submit it to the teacher in your classroom. The teacher will give it to the program coordinator. You do not need to complete Time-Off Requests for times that Smith College is closed.

If You Are Sick

If you sick, please call x3290 as soon as possible to let the teacher know that you will not be at work. Below are common symptoms that may prevent you from working:

- Uncontrolled diarrhea. The employee may return after a normal stool.
- Vomiting. The employee may return 24 hours after the vomiting has ceased.
- Conjunctivitis. The employee may return 24 hours after treatment has started.
- Fever of 101 degrees or more. An employee must be fever-free, without the aid of a fever reducer, for 24 hours.

Dress Code

Please dress appropriately for the kind of work you are doing. Certain kinds of clothing (e.g., short shorts, ripped jeans, mini skirts, midriff shirts, etc.) are not appropriate for a program that tries to convey to others that we are professionals. Other kinds of clothing and accessories (e.g., spiked heels, certain kinds of jewelry, clothing that doesn't allow for easy movement) may interfere with your job performance or be unsafe. Casual outfits and footwear that are comfortable and allow for easy movement are appropriate. Out of respect for children and adults who have respiratory problems, we encourage staff not to wear strong perfumes or colognes.

Eating in Classrooms

Please model appropriate and courteous eating habits for children. Staff members should join children for snack and/or lunch and eat at the tables. If classrooms have an open snack procedure, staff may join children at the tables. Please model professional behavior for students and visitors and courteous behavior for children by refraining from eating while working in the classroom except in these circumstances. The teachers' workroom is available during breaks. Because families are requested to send nutritious food for their children, we ask staff to eat only healthful food in the classroom.

BannerWeb Time Entry

Students submit hours on BannerWeb bi-weekly. If you fail to submit your time by the deadline, please download a paper voucher from BannerWeb.

If you have any questions about payroll, please ask the program coordinator or contact the Payroll Office at x2213.

Smoking

There is no smoking allowed in the building at Fort Hill. Many children, families and staff are allergic to smoke and we ask that employees refrain from smoking before and during work hours because smoke odors linger on clothing.

Babysitting for Families

Families often ask for the names of students who would like to babysit in their homes. Each fall we ask students if they would like to have their name and e-mail included on a list for parents to contact. If you develop a relationship with a family outside of Fort Hill, please remember that confidentiality is of the utmost importance. Please refrain from discussing the child's school experience with the family and refer them to the teacher. Please do not discuss other children or staff members with families.

Reporting Structure

The director reports to the director of Human Resources, the program coordinator, visual arts teachers, administrative assistant and supervising teachers report to the director, the rotating assistants report to the program coordinator, and the assistant teachers report to their supervising teachers.

If you have a question or concern

We encourage you to communicate with teachers about children's behavior and to ask questions. We encourage questions and regular communication in order to be clear, consistent and respectful in our teaching and caregiving.

If you have a conflict or a concern at work, please first discuss the problem with those who are directly involved. If the issue is not resolved, please talk with your supervising teacher, the director or the program coordinator. If the problem cannot be resolved within the CECE, please refer to the College Handbook for appropriate steps to take.

Thank You!

Thank you for joining the Fort Hill community. We look forward to working together to support the growth and learning of everyone at Fort Hill as we engage in the joy, work and wonder of childhood.